



Origin of Family, Property and State

Today we feature Chapter 9, the chapter called “Barbarism and Civilisation”, of Engels’ book “[The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State](#)”. The Chapter is attached, and linked below as PDF download. You can safely ignore the first three paragraphs of the chapter. They refer to previous chapters. The remainder of Chapter 9 is self-contained.

“The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State” is a classic of the first rank, both within the field of Marxism, and more widely.

Lenin relied on this work. He referred to it often, for the illumination that it gives to the revolutionary question of The State, and to the necessity of the withering away of the State.

But this work of Engels’ is also foundational in Archaeology and Paleoanthropology (i.e. the study of the pre-history of human society), just as Engels’ “[The Condition of the Working](#)

[Class in England](#)” was foundational to the study of the formation of cities, (i.e. Urbanism, also called Urban Studies or Town Planning).

Engels, who did not formally attend a university, is nevertheless one of the towering historic founders of scholarly disciplines.

Marx had already worked on source material for this project, including Henry Morgan’s 1877 book called “[Ancient Society](#)”. Engels found Marx’s working papers after Marx’s death in 1883. He immediately set to work to prepare a book from them for publication.

The special and particular contribution of “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State” is that it shows the common, interdependent origin of private property and the State, plus the fall of the women into the oppressive condition which they subsequently continued to suffer, and also the original setting for the institutions of money, writing and law.

The simultaneous revolutionary break in all of these things marks the end of pre-history and the beginning of history, which as Marx and Engels had noted in the [Communist Manifesto](#), was from that point onwards “a history of class struggles”.

The transition from prehistoric communism into class society took place a long time ago in some parts of the world, and much more recently in other parts. In Egypt and in Iraq (Mesopotamia) it may have happened more than five

thousand years ago. In most other parts of the world the transition was much more recent.

The simultaneous nature of the triple catastrophe (property, class-divided state, and the downfall of women) may mean that the remedy for all three will likewise have to be simultaneous. The urgent abolition or “withering away” of the State is for that reason a woman’s issue, and the socialist project is a woman’s project, because they are all part of the same complex of oppressions. Communism is a necessity for women.

The reversal of the downfall of the women can only be achieved by the abolition of property and the State. Likewise, the abolition of property and the State cannot be achieved without the conscious restoration of women to their proper place in human society. All three goals have to be achieved together. The three goals are actually the same goal, and the name of it is [communism](#).

Images: On the left, a painting by Tamara Lempicka of another way of imagining the origins of human society - Adam, Eve, and the Apple (The Fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil); on the right, the frontispiece of the first edition of “Leviathan”, by Thomas Hobbes; and in the centre, money, token of contract, that can only exist where there is a state.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Origin of Family, Private Property and State, C9, Engels](#).
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